

A Testimony of Surrender – Sonja Botes

Sonja is an alumnus of Living Waters and a member of our ministry team for the new Living Waters program in Brighton. She is a treasured member of our team and has a heart of love for Jesus Christ.



Where to start? Rejected, devalued, addicted, abandoned, fearful, insecure, manipulative, compulsive liar, these are just a few of the issues I walked in with when I showed up the Living Waters. To say I was a mess would be an understatement, but I came expectantly and God met me in a powerful and life changing way.

Just to give you some background. I grew up in a Christian home where my physical needs were met, but emotionally, mentally and spiritually it was

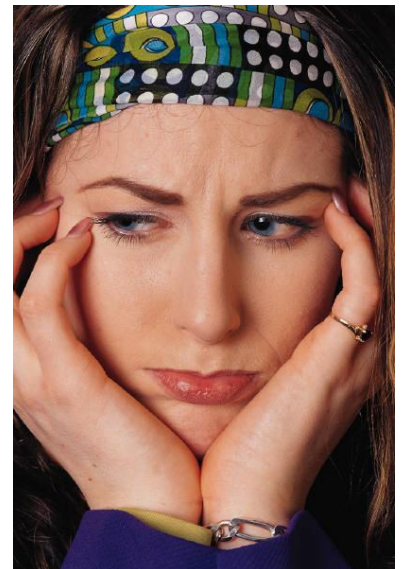
unsafe because of my parent's unhealthiness. On the outside we looked like a normal family, but on the inside it was chaos. My parents got divorced when I was 6 and the unstable confusing home life just became more toxic. Because of this toxic home life, I learned to control my environment (I had to be strong, I had to appear okay, I couldn't cry, I couldn't voice my hurt and confusion and I couldn't be bad). Little did I know that I couldn't control anything. I've always talked to God, even as a little girl, and so when my parents would fight I would bargain with God. For example: "Jesus I promise to be a good girl, if You could just let mom and dad stop fighting." In my naiveté I was sabotaging myself, setting myself up for failure and more hurt.

My dad disapproved of me because I look like my mother, who he dislikes because she was a disappointment to him. My mom was an emotional mess because my dad left her and all she wanted was to be loved. My mom ended up with a homosexual relationship and my dad became more controlling and a womanizer. In the end, I was rejected by both parents, first at age six when my dad divorced my mom and left, then at age 18 when my mom left with her partner. At age nine or ten I was introduced to masturbation and not long after that I found my brother's playboy magazine. At age 12 my mom presented me with a romance novel and by age 13 I was addicted to pornography.

I feared my dad and had little to no interaction with him. My mom was a loving person, but she was emotionally draining and a manipulator. So needless to say, I had major mother and father wounds.

During the course of my life I kind of just bounced around, had no direction and I believed that I would never live past age 30. I was confused, addicted to pornography, fearful, depressed, insecure but prideful. I had to keep the exterior nice and glossy, a man pleaser and an overall mess.

A friend of mine told me about the Living Waters program and the first time I went through it I did it just to please my friends and to get them off my case. The second time I went for myself. The first thing I had to give up was control. There is a story about a man who struggled with letting go and one night on my way to a Living Waters meeting, Jesus reminded me of the story. It's a story about a man who got



into trouble as he was hiking up a mountain. After a long climb, when he was almost to the top of the mountain, his foot slipped and he fell down. So there he was, his hands tightly wrapped around a flimsy branch, holding on for dear life, while his feet dangled in space. So he began to yell, "Anyone up there? Help! Help! Please, help me! Help! Help! Please, anyone, please help me! Is there anyone up there!?" An answer came, "I am here!" The desperate man then cried, "Who are you...can you help me?!" Another answer came back, "I am the Lord. Just let go of the branch so that I can help you." There was a moment of silence. Then the man cried out, "Is there anyone else out there?!"

Very similar to the man in the story, I was holding onto a branch and Jesus was asking me to let go. I remembered turning to my friend, at the Living Waters meetings, and telling her "I'm letting go" – just as simple as that, I made my choice. To be truthful, there was a part of me that wanted to see what Jesus would do with me if I surrendered. Jesus never disappoints.

After voicing my choice, almost immediately, I had a vision (Jesus uses visions to speak to me). I saw myself hanging from a branch, similar to the man in the story and Jesus was asking me to let go. I would like to say that I trusted Jesus and just let go. After I "dialogued" with Him, He convinced me to let go. I then found myself standing in the shadow of a giant and I knew that I was facing my Goliath and I knew that the Goliath was my past. Jesus showed me that I couldn't move to the left, to the right, nor move forward or backward, because no matter where I looked, I saw my Goliath and it paralyzed me. Jesus took care of the giant and as the giant was falling, a new shadow took its place, the shadow of the Cross. I followed the shadow of the Cross, away from my past and Jesus was waiting for me there. When I stood before Jesus, a question came to mind, a question that surprised me: "Jesus, will You be the father I never had?" The moment I asked that questions an alignment happened – a shift in perspective – it's the best way I can describe it. I knew that my earthly father could never fill my need for acceptance, love and affirmation. I had to let go of my unfair expectations I had for my earthly father and allow Jesus to fill those needs.



I had two options, I could either hold onto my flimsy past and false sense of control, or I could let go and take the first step toward true healing and surrendering to God. I made my choice and surrendered. Today, I'm accepted, valued, freed, loved, bold, secure and truthful in my relationship with Jesus. I'm still on my healing journey, but my relationship with Jesus is rooted and grounded.

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If you are struggling with sexual and relational issues, the Living Waters program can change your life.

Living Waters is a Christ-centered discipleship/ministry program for people seeking healing in areas of sexual and relational brokenness including codependency, pornography addiction, promiscuity, homosexuality, sexual ambivalence, childhood sexual abuse, transgender issues, difficulty in establishing and sustaining intimacy in relationships, and more. The program runs for twenty-four weeks, and includes worship, a large group teaching time, and small group ministry with an emphasis on healing prayer. Discounts are available for early registration.

*For registration information call **586.739.5114**.*